

# **Mindfulness Strategies for Navigating COVID-19**

## **with Linda Janasz**

National Webinar Transcript

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Presented by:



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## Mindfulness Strategies for Navigating COVID-19 with Linda Janasz

Elana Silber:

Good afternoon to everyone on the call. Really nice to see everyone.

Elana Silber:

So I'm thinking about these webinars a little bit like when you get on an airplane, you're not 100% sure if you're on the right flight, so just wanted to remind everyone this is Sharsheret. We are the Jewish breast and ovarian cancer community, and the webinar we're presenting now is mindfulness strategies for navigating COVID-19.

Elana Silber:

So really, really excited to see all of you, which means that you are ready to learn more and put some strategies together to address what you're dealing with.

Elana Silber:

The goal for today's session is really [inaudible 00:00:41] the science behind mindfulness, and how it can help all of us deal with both the [inaudible 00:00:49] aspects of what we're dealing with, and also the spiritual discomfort of this moment.

Elana Silber:

And it's going to be very practical. The goal is that at the end of the session, you will have four new tools and strategies that you can immediately put into action, that should help ease, a little bit, what you're going through, the constant distraction, the stress that we're all facing. This is practical help.

Elana Silber:

The timing is not by accident. We chose to present this during Passover because we know it's challenging. None of us, no one is celebrating the way we normally do, whether that means you're traveling or celebrating it with extended family, friends. It's not normal life.

Elana Silber:

And the weeks [inaudible 00:01:38]. I think we're about four weeks here. I'm in the northeast. We're dealing with the dismal [inaudible 00:01:42] weather, so all this is affecting how we feel, and it adds to the stress. So we're going to come up with these techniques to help with the stress.

Elana Silber:

So there's a couple things. If you want to participate, this call is going to be recorded, so for those who were not available, they can access it afterwards on Sharsheret's website. But you can participate anonymously. We are very mindful of people's privacy, so if this is something you would like to participate privately, you can go into the box with your name on it, there are three dots in the top corner, click on it, and you can rename yourself. You can be anything you want to be. And you can also turn off the video portion on the bottom of your screen. In different screens, it shows up in different places.

Elana Silber:

There's also an opportunity to call in, and it's in the chat. If you're on, you can see it in the chat. The number is 16699006833, and then the meeting ID is 167421068, and the password is 370670.

Elana Silber:

And these instructions will be periodically added to the chat box if you choose to do so.

Elana Silber:

So, again, we're so glad that you could be with us, and [inaudible 00:02:58], I feel like it's a tight-knit community and we can all feel comfortable with each other as we take the next half hour to de stress, decompose just a little bit.

Elana Silber:

And our expert on the call today is Linda Janasz. She is a leading researcher and award winning journalist with a PhD. She created the six week [inaudible 00:03:21] training program called Mindfulness Meditation and Movement.

Elana Silber:

Her Working Wisdom Project is part of Berkeley's Greater Good IDO, and she's the founder of Mindfulness Alliance, which is a nonprofit that supports the work and research of mindfulness and and its practical applications. She works with individuals and corporations, helping thousands cultivate balance in an unbalanced world. And right now, I don't think I will be very balanced.

Elana Silber:

Linda has worked with our Sharsheret Florida office in the past, and she shares her knowledge of mindfulness with our callers and our volunteers in Florida.

Elana Silber:

I wanted to just do a quick thank you to our sponsors today, Seattle Genetics and the Siegmund and Edith Blumenthal Foundation, whose support during this uncertain time has really made it possible for us to present these kind of sessions for you.

Elana Silber:

So we're going to start off with Linda. I'm going to introduce her and then we're going to do a little bit of questions and answers, so it's really my pleasure to open up the floor to Linda.

Elana Silber:

So, Linda, thank you.

Linda Janasz:

Thank you so much for inviting me to Sharsheret. As you had mentioned, I've had the privilege of sharing some of this work and research with the Florida office, and to some of the individuals here, so I want to tell you how much I respect and honor the work that you do.

Linda Janasz:

So over the next, about half hour, more or less, probably a bit more, we're going to talk about some science and strategies for cultivating more ease in our life, and I think we could all use that right now.

## Mindfulness Strategies for Navigating COVID-19 with Linda Janasz

Linda Janasz:

But it's necessary for us to understand the opposite of ease is unease, and unease can lead to chronic stress. And what chronic stress can lead to is disease.

Linda Janasz:

So, right now, understanding, now but always, the idea of cultivating more calm actually impacts our immune response, and I think that that's really relevant. So some of the tools and strategies that we're going to talk about today will help you reduce stress and anxiety, increase emotional regulation, improve positive emotions in decision making, reduce the pain response, improve your focus, and some of our evidence-based research shows this may be as good as antidepressants in reducing depression in the lab.

Linda Janasz:

So some of these practices I'm taking from the six week program, and we're going to leave you with some own work, or Shalom work, developing some practices for peace in your life.

Linda Janasz:

And let me just preface this by saying, often I'll hear people say, "Well, I'm not good at meditation, I'm good at that." But the reality is, the more we practice, the more familiar we become with anything, even if it's hitting a tennis ball, whether it's putting a ball in a in a basket, we become more comfortable and this is about our relationship with ourselves, our thoughts and our emotions. And I can't think of anything more important than this. And I know firsthand this can improve everything, everything in your life.

Linda Janasz:

I'm going to tell you a little bit about my personal journey, which I don't normally, but I think relevant to this. About, way back when, we had a terrible family tragedy. And at that time, despite the fact that I had training into psychotherapy, I personally fell into a black hole, and I couldn't quite get my way out of it.

Linda Janasz:

It was around this time where MBSR, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, was being publicly introduced, and I was invited to study this at [inaudible 00:07:21] Community Hospital, after which, I went on to study Buddhism through Harvard, and there was a saying, a quote, in those scriptures, that said, "Pain is inevitable, and suffering is optional." Think about that for a second. Pain is inevitable, and suffering's optional.

Linda Janasz:

We are all going to have pain, great pain in our lives, whether it be our personal journeys or people that we love and care about, and even right now, the fear and the pain associated with this pandemic. But the idea that we can reduce our suffering to me is so significant.

Linda Janasz:

And that's when I went on to develop the MMM six week program. And it's really designed to teach you the skills to improve your capacity to self manage.

Linda Janasz:

So let's do a very quick psychology lesson. We human beings have something called negativity bias. Evolutionary psychologists would say that we remember things that are more negative as a survival mechanism for us. We know, when we think back, and we think of things that have caused us suffering, hardship, fear or pain, we feel it differently than the things that were kind of joyful. They tend not to stick with us in the same way.

Linda Janasz:

So, these emotional sensations that show up for us, remember our thoughts, our feelings are very linked. Our goal is to rise above this conditioning, managing the emotions that show up, and in the words of the great British philosopher George Bernard Shaw, to me mindfulness, he didn't quite say this. He said, "We don't find ourselves. We create ourselves."

Linda Janasz:

Mindfulness is, to me, where that beautiful space is. It's about creating ourselves. It's intentional. It's an intentional and attitudinal way of showing up to our experience.

Linda Janasz:

So, the science, again, we have to understand the nature of fear. Fear is a normal part of what will show up for us. It's, again, there to keep us safe. But trauma and worry live [inaudible 00:09:45] bodies.

Linda Janasz:

Understanding right now many of us are dealing with significant worry. Worry, really, ultimately lives in the future. It is our desire, truly, right, what are we doing next week, next month? How do we plan for the kids? Where will they go to college? Where will I be in six months?

Linda Janasz:

It's that what-if place, but the science tells us that with mindful awareness and by being present, we increase our happiness.

Linda Janasz:

So we're going to do our first exercise. It is one thing to understand the science, but we human beings, we can't think our way out of something. We need to do it. We need to inhabit it. We need to experience it.

Linda Janasz:

So I'm going to encourage everybody in your own homes, in your own lab. Your laboratory is your mind, your heart, your spirit. We're going to do an exercise called the meta awareness exercise.

Linda Janasz:

So, before we start, let me just share with you the science of thinking. Every minute we have about 44 thoughts. In an average day, you have about 65,000 thoughts. I am just going to pop on, and I just want to share with you something that I think is worth ...

Linda Janasz:

Oh, can I share this with you? Let me just see. All righty.

Linda Janasz:

I don't know if I can, but I will show you another slide after. It's of a person standing there, a cartoon, and there's thousands of thoughts flooding to their head. Bottom line, mindfulness and meditation is developing a healthy relationship with our thoughts. Because the reality is, thoughts are not facts. Repeat that to yourself. Thoughts are not facts. If we have about 65,000 thoughts a day, and most of them are there to keep us safe, a thought is not necessarily a fact, but it's hard for us to not be hooked and triggered by our thinking.

Linda Janasz:

So meta awareness in our own labs now. We're going to do two parts of a practice. I'd like you to close your eyes. Soften into this now. And I'd essentially like you to watch and notice your thoughts and any sensations you may have in your body.

Linda Janasz:

And I'm going to ask you to think. Let's go to a place, a memory, an experience. Perhaps a [inaudible 00:12:57], Seder you had last year.

Linda Janasz:

Can you smell the food?

Linda Janasz:

Can you see who's sitting there around the table?

Linda Janasz:

Can you see their faces?

Linda Janasz:

And if you can, send those that are with you, even now, even though we're social distancing, send them some love.

Linda Janasz:

And let's open our eyes.

Linda Janasz:

The idea that we are ultimately cultivating an improved relationship with our thinking is really what this is about. For many of us, when we went to that [inaudible 00:13:49] Seder last year, we could actually maybe smell the chicken soup. We could see the faces of those that we cared about.

Linda Janasz:

Very often, when we understand that a thought can turn into an emotion, really, that's classical conditioning. Ivan Pavlov, the Russian psychologist, understood that when they ring the bell, that a dog, when it knew it was going to have food, would salivate. A thought can turn into a feeling. What meta

awareness allows us [inaudible 00:14:23] is begin to understand that our thoughts and our feelings are interconnected.

Linda Janasz:

And the more that we understand this, we begin to notice faulty thinking. For example, cognitive behavioral therapy will tell us to notice our patterns of thinking, like, "Overthinking helps me solve problems," or "I worry about you, because I care." This is about our beginning to understand our relationship with our thoughts and our feelings, even in such things as fear being triggered for us.

Linda Janasz:

So the next part of this exercise, once we start noticing, and I think once you begin to notice your relationship with your thinking, it is the beginning of a kind of enlightenment. When we recognize that all of the thoughts that we have aren't factual, and we can create some space, we don't get hooked by things in the same way. We tend to be able to respond to our environments in a wiser in a clearer way.

Linda Janasz:

Meditation is a formal practice. It is strengthening the control over the workings of our brain. Now, we understand that our brain is like a muscle. And when we meditate, we are actually, it's like a bicep curl for our brain.

Linda Janasz:

When the six week program, if you were to take out, and I will invite everyone to take it during this time, that if we put you into an MRI, and over the six week period you are meditating, you'd actually strengthen the prefrontal cortex, the area of your brain where you make decisions, and shrink the amygdala, which is that fight or flight section.

Linda Janasz:

But there's also another component, other than just purely meditating, that is significant. It's a tool I'm going to encourage everybody to start using right now. It is breath. By slowing our breath down and consciously breathing, it is the most productive thing that you can do for creating immediate relief from stress and anxiety and depression.

Linda Janasz:

For those of you who have perhaps taken yoga, you know pranayama breath, this idea of breath of life, this inhaling and exhaling in a regulated way actually impacts our parasympathetic system.

Linda Janasz:

And in Judaism, the Hebrew word ruah to the divine force. It also means breath or spirit, and it can also refer to somebody's emotional state. So we breathe about 22,000 times a day. Managing our breath right now and engaging in that relaxation response can reduce your cortisol.

Linda Janasz:

So we're going to begin this exercise. Place your hand on your diaphragm, on your belly, and begin to notice the breath coming in through the nostril, in through the chest, and into the diaphragm. The

gentle expansion and contraction. There is an area called the polyvagas theory that helps our body shift from fight or flight to rest and digest.

Linda Janasz:

Slowing our breath down and regulating it actually helps our heartbeat, our capacity to focus.

Linda Janasz:

So we're going to try something that is a little bit different. I'm going to encourage you to slowly inhale. And then I'm going to encourage you to hold at the top for four seconds, and then slow the breath down. So let's begin to inhale, gently, one, two, three, four, pause, one, two, three, four, and exhale, gently, to your own rhythm, all the way out. And soften your gaze now. Inhale. One, two, three, and four. And exhale, four, three, two and one. Let's do that one more time. Inhaling, one, two, three and four, pause at a space that is right for you, and exhaling all the way out.

Linda Janasz:

And we're going to add an additional piece to this now. So mindful breathing, to me, is something you can take with you throughout your day. We're going to add on a piece of meditation now, that brain exercise, where we're going to notice the breath coming in and exhaling.

Linda Janasz:

So soften your gaze. And you may notice the breath coming in a little cooler, and exhaling a little bit warmer. Let's follow the rhythm of your own breath, a gentle pause, and exhaling all the way out. For the next moment, with meta awareness, notice any distraction that you have and bring it back to the air gently entering your nostril, and then exhaling.

Linda Janasz:

And when you are ready, take a deep breath and come all the way back.

Linda Janasz:

Now, just process what that was like. Our recognizing we can actually calm ourselves down and be more present is extraordinary. This, to me, is almost one of the magic wands, the tools, is that breath. And as you explore the practice, the mental exercise in controlling how we respond to our thinking, meditation, over time, becomes easier.

Linda Janasz:

So I notice here on my screen it says, "Host disabled attendee screen sharing." So I was going to show you, and perhaps I can't, actually an X ray, and the MRI is somebody before and after meditating. Let me see if we can do that. Oh, there we go. Let me just share that with you.

Linda Janasz:

Can you see that? Nod if you can, the before and after meditating. It's pretty extraordinary. Only 10 minutes of meditation. It shows you really what begins to happen in the brain. And I think that that's quite, quite extraordinary. We aren't really required a lot of time to do this, even a little bit of time, five to 10 minutes every day can make an enormous difference on your life, in your well being and in your happiness.



Linda Janasz:

What is truly so extraordinary is that we mind wander about 47% of the time. Half of the time we're not here. We're thinking about the past and we're thinking about the futures, so mind wandering is ubiquitous, and it affects everything that we do.

Linda Janasz:

But mind wandering is the most common predictors of unhappiness, and especially now, when we feel this potentially impending threat. We tend to be everywhere else but here. The more we are present, the more we notice what is actually good in our lives, mind wandering is also a predictor of an elevation of fear and stress.

Linda Janasz:

So here's our next exercise. It's a really simple one that I developed. It's called the mindful snapshot. We know what it's like to go around taking pictures with our phones but when we actually mentally focus and take a snapshot, it requires them to come back to what we're doing, because when we are able to redirect. And wherever you are right now, take a second. Turn on the screen and notice where you are. Focus and take a mental snapshot.

Linda Janasz:

It's as simple as redirecting us, and it produces rumination, which is that mental spinning, where you have a thought that you can't quite make sense of. We all know what it feels like. It can wake us up at night, that spinning thinking. Mindful snapshot helps reduce that.

Linda Janasz:

The reality is, when we focus not on how we're doing all the time, but on what we're doing, it brings focus and purpose to even the smallest routines of our lives. Even if we're simply cutting the carrots. When we're with that moment, it tends to elevate our experience.

Linda Janasz:

In Judaism, the term *kavanah* in Hebrew, which is intentional prayer, it's a form of mindful intention. It's praying with the heart, rather than solely the mind. *Kavanah* is focused intention for lighting the candles. Ultimately, when we are fully present with whatever we're doing, with our heart, and our mind, and our spirit, it elevates everything that we're doing. It takes the mundane and it makes it meaningful. And there is something profoundly beautiful to be fully present to whatever time we are given.

Linda Janasz:

So mindfulness, rather than a mental exercise, is outside of a formal training. It's a moment to moment, nonjudgmental experience to what we do on purpose. And in Pali, the language of the Buddha, *sati* meant to remember to remember.

Linda Janasz:

I will tell you I know firsthand it's one of the hardest things to do is to remembering, to being present. We are so distracted, so much of the time.

Linda Janasz:

So our next exercise and activity, because, remember, you have to do this to get the benefits. You can't just read about it. We have to engage in it. It's called positive activity that necessitates our brain and our body, and leaves us with a really nice sense of accomplishment.

Linda Janasz:

It's engaging in something where our mind and our body connect. It could be, I don't know, it could be cooking, it could be painting, it could be movement. I will tell you an interesting thing for me during this pandemic. I've started baking. Go figure. And it's been really rewarding for me. When we're fully engaged in whatever it is that we're doing.

Linda Janasz:

And the last exercise for your *shalom* work is to begin your day with gratitude.

Linda Janasz:

It is a form of focused prayer. It's the reverse. Prayer is asking. Mindful gratitude is really noticing. It primes our brain for resilience. We pivot to see what is good in our lives, and it helps us overcome our negative bias and our negative, entrenched conditions.

Linda Janasz:

And what we know is, and that's what the Working Wisdom Project is, it was published through Berkeley, is that it also improves our immune system. And we have a neurological response for it.

Linda Janasz:

So wherever you are right now, soften it. Notice if you're holding any tension. Relax. And I'd like you to think about five things that you're grateful for.

Linda Janasz:

And when we pivot like that, when we prime ourselves to begin our day by noticing and being thankful and grateful for what is good in our lives, to me it's like putting a destination in Waze or Google Maps. We go towards, are directionally on a path in a more positive and optimistic way. It helps us override things that are more difficult.

Linda Janasz:

I'm going to encourage you to start your day, every day, with noticing what you're grateful for. So our own work is to breathe. Help us regulate our stress response, to focus, to take snapshots throughout the day, because these moments, all of our moments, the good and the difficult, are worth remembering. Have some self compassion and patience with yourself.

Linda Janasz:

Very often, what meditation allows us to notice is faulty thinking, or unrealistically high standards that we may have for ourself. That meta awareness of patterns is important.

Linda Janasz:

So our own work, let's call it our *shalom* work, is to cultivate more ease and more peace in our lives.

Linda Janasz:

Evidence-based research that says when we are more mindful, we strengthen our ability to reduce mind wandering, and that reduces worry and improves all that we do. And I know firsthand that it's always a matter of overriding those tendencies. Our brains are only designed to keep us safe and to problem solve, not necessarily to be happy. That is up to us. And right now, more than ever, we want to reduce our stress and find more calm in this chaos, so that we can live with more ease and more grace, less stress and more patience and more self compassion and more self love. Because when we have that, we have that for others as well.

Linda Janasz:

We're always dealing with uncertainty, and right now, we may be feeling even more groundless, so allow yourselves these practices into your life. Thích Nhất Hạnh, the great Buddhist philosopher, said because of impermanence, everything is possible. This is an opportunity for us to learn to take the time to invest in our wellbeing, to strengthen our capacity to show up and be grateful for the miracles and the moments we are given, whatever they are.

Linda Janasz:

There's a wonderful proverb I'm going to end with that I read lately. If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person. If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house. If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation. And if there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.

Linda Janasz:

I'm going to pray that you all stay present, stay in and stay safe, because when you can't go outside, let's go inside. Let's do this self work right now for more meaning and more purpose, more resilience, so we can have more ease.

Linda Janasz:

In addition, I'm going to give you my email, so that you can get on my mailing list, so that I can share with you the MMM program. I am going to invite everybody here to be a guest at that. I would really be grateful to share that project with you.

Linda Janasz:

And if somebody is in great need, I am here also of service. I am here to share with you a 20 minute session. My email is [Linda@mindfulalliance.org](mailto:Linda@mindfulalliance.org). I am grateful for Sharsheret, to have the privilege and the opportunity to share some of the science. Remember, it's a practice, it's not a perfect, but the more that we do it, the more it becomes familiar, and the more familiar it is, the more we can live with ease and grace and goodness.

Linda Janasz:

So [Linda@mindfulalliance.org](mailto:Linda@mindfulalliance.org), and my heart is open for any questions that you guys have for me.

Elana Silber:

Thank you, Linda. Really appreciate, I think it's the first time, personally, for me, that I've had quiet and deep thinking since this started, so just for that alone, to bring us together, I think that is so helpful, and

your pace and your tone, just perfect for what we all needed today, so thank you so much of giving of yourself.

Elana Silber:

We did have a few questions that came in in advance, and I would love to pose them to you for in the next couple of minutes.

Linda Janasz:

Perfect.

Elana Silber:

And if anyone does have other questions that they want, general questions, they can type it into the chat.

Elana Silber:

But for piratical purposes, someone gave a very specific question: "How can I control my anger towards my family during this difficult time? We're all on top of each other and my kids are more needy than usual."

Linda Janasz:

That's an outstanding question. Anger is something we generate in ourselves, and it is really an emotional toxin. I think right now is to really soften our expectations, and I think that when we feel so out of control, we often feel the desire to control what is in front of us.

Linda Janasz:

Social psychologists are saying now more than ever, even our buying patterns, whether it be the need to hunt and gather toilet paper to even what's in our home.

Linda Janasz:

I don't know the age of the children, but we know that presence and mindfulness and mindful parenting is significant, perhaps more now than ever, that when we give our children our full attention, rather than being distracted, they'll do anything to get our attention, even with poor behavior. So, ensuring that we have things like proper mealtimes where the phone is not on, really I encourage individuals, reduce television news exposure. It's like watching a horror film right now. We still feel that stress response. Make sure the access to television news is really reduced. If possible, particularly with kids, have them do some physical exercise, get them, if possible, outside. If not, do something inside, stars or a hundred jumping jacks.

Linda Janasz:

But recognize how we respond to our own emotions really is what mindfulness and awareness and that meta awareness is about. It's learning how to calm ourselves down and to have more ease in our bodies, because emotions are sensations. Anger and resentment is a sensation. So use breath. Use meditation. Observe your own standards, that they're not unrealistically high right now. Things may be noisy, and to have some acceptance with that.

Elana Silber:

Thank you. Another question came in. What is tapping meditation, and what do you think of its efficacy?

Linda Janasz:

I think that there's, so you know, there's a variety of different meditations and I think what we're trying to do is focus the brain. The brain, really, that muscle, it's the desire to get hold of our thoughts and feelings. And as we strengthen the capacity to focus, and that's exactly what that does, it's a mind-body connection where tapping is used as the focus, we strengthen our capacity to respond to our thoughts. These mental exercises help us respond to our thoughts, so rather than inhabiting anger or fear, we can intentionally respond to situations with more grace and presence.

Elana Silber:

Someone asked, "My mastectomy was canceled until further notice due to COVID. How do I remain calm?"

Linda Janasz:

I think that it is the desire, to begin again, is to have some compassion. It's not that the fear won't show up. I think cultivating calm every day is that place of beginning again, is using breath to stay calm, is using mindfulness and gratitude and meditation. And to deal with the what-ifs. We want to plan [inaudible]. The what-ifs are those mental and emotional hooks that push us into that place of fear.

Linda Janasz:

What we know is now, and this will pass. So for now, the kindest and best thing you can do is stay as present as possible. And when the what-if comes up, is to come back to fact, to deal with what is. And what now is to do what we can to stay as present and as calm as we can.

Elana Silber:

Thank you. So we're getting towards the end of the webinar so I wanted to thank you. And again, thank you so much for sharing your email address with everyone. It's in the chat box. I also, though it's not exactly the same, I want to do to let everyone on the call know that Sharsheret has a team of social workers and a genetic counselor on staff who can help with other types of coping mechanisms and skills to help weather this storm and beyond.

Elana Silber:

Sharsheret's social workers and genetic counselors have always been providing this kind of emotional support, mental health counseling and guidance by the phone and by email, texting, whatever you're most comfortable doing. At any point, we are here for you. We continue to be here for you, and we really care about you and getting you through this.

Elana Silber:

We know that you're in your homes alone, but we say that we are all together and we really are seeing some of your faces, your names, whether they're real or not, it helps us feel more connected. Sharsheret is the Hebrew word for chain, and we want everyone to be part of that chain, and that's what makes us stronger, so take advantage of the services that we offer that are free, that are

confidential, that are available to you when you need it, how often you need it, in any way. Really, it's an honor to be there for you and mental health and mindfulness. That's what's going to get us through this.

Elana Silber:

Until we hear real directions on what's next, this is where we are, and we're going to do this together, and we're going to see the future in a better way, in a calm way, and we're going to stay present. So wishing everyone continued good health. Stay in touch, and we'll be presenting webinars on other topics in the next coming weeks, and this will be archived on our website, sharsheret.org.

Elana Silber:

Thank you and stay well.

## **About Sharsheret**

Sharsheret, Hebrew for “chain”, is a national non-profit organization, improves the lives of Jewish women and families living with or at increased genetic risk for breast or ovarian cancer through personalized support and saves lives through educational outreach.

With four offices (California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), Sharsheret serves 150,000 women, families, health care professionals, community leaders, and students, in all 50 states. Sharsheret creates a safe community for women facing breast cancer and ovarian cancer and their families at every stage of life and at every stage of cancer - from before diagnosis, during treatment and into the survivorship years. While our expertise is focused on young women and Jewish families, more than 15% of those we serve are not Jewish. All Sharsheret programs serve all women and men.

As a premier organization for psychosocial support, Sharsheret’s Executive Director chairs the Federal Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer in Young Women, Sharsheret works closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and participates in psychosocial research studies and evaluations with major cancer centers, including Georgetown University

Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. Sharsheret is accredited by the Better Business Bureau and has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years.

Sharsheret offers the following national programs:

#### The Link Program

- Peer Support Network, connecting women newly diagnosed or at high risk of developing breast cancer one-on-one with others who share similar diagnoses and experiences
- Embrace™, supporting women living with advanced breast cancer • Genetics for Life®, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer
- Thriving Again®, providing individualized support, education, and survivorship plans for young breast cancer survivors • Busy Box®, for young parents facing breast cancer
- Best Face Forward®, addressing the cosmetic side effects of treatment
- Family Focus®, providing resources and support for caregivers and family members
- Ovarian Cancer Program, tailored resources and support for young Jewish women and families facing ovarian cancer • Sharsheret Supports™, developing local support groups and programs

#### Education and Outreach Programs

- Health Care Symposia, on issues unique to younger women facing breast cancer
- Sharsheret on Campus, outreach and education to students on campus
- Sharsheret Educational Resource Booklet Series, culturally-relevant publications for Jewish women and their families and healthcare Professionals

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